



The **Code of Conduct** for the **Protection of Children** from **Sexual Exploitation** in **Travel and Tourism**

A crime not widely acknowledged is the **sexual exploitation of children** in travel and tourism. In order to combat this terrible crime, an international initiative among tourism industries has established a set of guidelines, called **The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism [The Code]**, by which tourism companies can join forces to take action to protect children from sexual exploitation. The Code has become an international tool to educate the tourism industry and tourists alike. A company's membership within The Code is a tool of accountability that travellers can use to decide where to spend their money.

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Tourism professionals are in key positions to prevent child sex tourism by adopting The Code.

The Code (<http://www.thecode.org>) is an industry-driven, multi-stakeholder responsible tourism initiative for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

Child sex tourism is the sexual exploitation of children by a person who travels from his home district, geographical region, or country in order to have sexual contact with children. Child sex tourists can be domestic travellers or international tourists who use the accommodation, transportation and other tourism-related services to commit the crime.

The active involvement of tourism companies is crucial if child sex tourism is to be successfully addressed. While tourism companies are not responsible for child sex tourism, tourism professionals are in key positions to intervene by protecting children and reporting cases.

The Code was developed by ECPAT Sweden in collaboration with Scandinavian tourism companies and implemented in 1998. It was one of the first initiatives to define the role and obligations of tourism companies. Any tourism company or business can join The Code and implement the following six criteria:

1. To establish an ethical corporate policy regarding sexual exploitation of children
2. To train personnel in the country of origin and in destinations
3. To introduce clauses in contracts with suppliers
4. To provide information to travellers by means of awareness materials
5. To provide information to local "key persons" at tourism destinations
6. To report annually on implementation to The Code

Since 2004, The Code has established an independent non-profit organization led by a multi-stakeholder Board of Directors with international representatives from the tourism industry and NGOs. The Code is also greatly supported by a number of 'Local Code Representatives' (LCR), mostly ECPAT groups or other NGOs that recruit possible members, support their implementation of The Code, and provide child protection expertise to the tourism companies, such as facilitation of trainings.

Training of tourism employees improved staff motivation, encouraged teamwork and increased retention.

With over 1200 corporate signatories to The Code from 42 countries, including leading companies such as Kuoni, ACCOR, Carlson and Delta, The Code has raised the profile of the issue of child sex tourism to the tourism industry and beyond. Also, The Code has been highlighted as a prominent corporate social responsibility tool by the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility, making it compulsory for achieving fair





trade tourism status in South Africa and TourCert status in Europe. The Code has been honoured with multiple awards: Ashoka Changemakers' Ending Global Slavery Award; WTTC 'Tourism for Tomorrow' Award; The 'Ethical Corporation' Award; Travel and Leisure Magazine's 'Human Rights Leadership Award.

The aim of The Code is to advance the protection of children within its member companies; making child protection sustainable. Through the implementation of The Code, each company can see benefits through empowerment of their staff to act and gain strong support from their customers. For example, in 2001, ACCOR Asia joined The Code and due to success of the initiative, ACCOR headquarter signed The Code for its entire company. Currently, ACCOR implements The Code in 36 countries and together with ECPAT have trained over 70,000 employees on commercial sexual exploitation of children and how to report cases. **Employers noted that the training helped improve staff motivation and pride in their job, encouraged teamwork and increased retention.** Also, in the Netherlands, **The Code has had a clear impact on tour operators' awareness of child sex tourism.** The Netherlands' Travel Counsellors work with freelance agents trained in awareness of The Code and child sex tourism who have spoken to customers about child protection; and, the customers are receptive to the information. Lastly, countries and various Ministries of Tourism can also encourage tourism companies to adopt or use The Code as a 'child protection' standard/award for the travel and tourism industry.

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children from
sex tourism



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